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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF OBADIAH

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE DIVINITY SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(DEPARTMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE AND INTERPRETATION)



BY
GEORGE A. PECKHAM

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Published February 1910

Composed and Printed By
The University of Chicago Press
Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A.

TO
MY WIFE



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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF OBADIAH

Obadiah, the shortest of Old Testament books, offers for solution an unusual number of difficult problems. There has been, and still is, great diversity of opinion regarding the date of the oracle and the circumstances that occasioned it. Is the prophecy as we have it a unit? If not, how is it to be divided? Are vss. 1-7 a record of history, or a prediction, or a "prophetic estimate" of events that were just taking place at the time when the message was delivered? Difficulties in syntax, lexicography, and history confront the student in almost every verse.

At the beginning of our study we are met by the striking resemblance between Obad., vss. 1-9 and parts of Jer. 49:7-22. Obad., vss. 1-4 and 5, 6 have so much in common with Jeremiah that there can be no thought of independent origin for the two pieces. Either Jeremiah borrowed from Obadiah or Obadiah from Jeremiah, or both must be indebted to an older common source, or both have been annotated and increased by the same hand. From a careful comparison of the two texts it appears that in Obadiah the arrangement of the verses is the logical one and that the prophecy as a whole is here in its more original form; but occasionally Jeremiah offers the better reading: for example, the superiority of Jer. 49:9 over Obad., vs. 5; and Jer. 49:15b over Obad., vs. 2b, is evident. The present form of vs. 2 of Obadiah is due to textual corruption and that of vs. 5 to interpolation. But it is unnecessary to enter here upon an extended discussion of the relation of Obadiah to the parallel passage of Jeremiah, for an excellent presentation of the material may be found in the article on "Obadiah" by J. A. Selbie, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*. See also the Introductions of Kuenen, Driver, and Cornill.

The position of many scholars, stated by Kuenen (*Einleitung*), is that both have followed the same original, of which Jeremiah has made free use, while Obadiah has taken it over with very slight changes (Ewald, Wildeboer, Briggs, Driver, J. A. Selbie, and others). Hitzig in supposing that Jeremiah served as a model for Obadiah has had few followers. Wellhausen, Nowack, and Marti, who, with Stade, Smend, and Schwally, consider the piece from Jeremiah to be a very late production, maintain that its author borrowed directly from our book which, according to their theory, has suffered corruptions and received additions after his use of it. The arguments offered for this position seem valid.

This short book has passed through its full share of changes, which

will be noticed below. For the possibilities in the way of displacement, transposition, interpolation, glosses, and corruption of text compare the **MT** of I Kings, chaps. 2-14, with the text of the LXX. To take a single example, between vss. 35 and 36 of chap. 2 there is found in the LXX a section which corresponds to 5:9, 10; 3:1b; 5:29; 9:24, 25, 23, 17, 18 of the **MT**. Every student of Old Testament textual criticism knows that many other passages would serve equally well for illustration.

Before the appearance of Ewald's commentary, the unity of the book of Obadiah was generally accepted without question; although some saw that the last few verses had little to do with the rest of the prophecy, and gave them a purely messianic interpretation. Drusius, in his commentary (1594), says, on vs. 17, "What follows refers to the deliverance of the church and the reign of Christ," and Tarnovius in 1624 gives vss. 17-21 a spiritual application to the church and her enemies; but Ewald was the first to suggest that a prophet living in the exile had made use of an older oracle as the foundation of his own message of comfort to his people. According to Ewald, more than half of the present piece, vss. 1-10, 15-18, in subject-matter, language, and style, points to one or more older prophets. Little if any change has been made in vss. 1-10. It is not certain, however, that vss. 15-18 constituted a part of this older oracle against Edom: in them our prophet may have used more than one source. Vss. 11-14 and 19-21 are his own composition, dating soon after the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans. The historical background may be seen in a corrected reading of II Kings 16:6 and in Obad., vs. 7. Rezin has conquered the territory east of the Jordan down to Elath, expelling the Jews and restoring the city to the Edomites. The latter, however, are obliged to tolerate the rule of their Aramean allies, which leads to bloody quarrels between them and their friends and protectors, so that many of the most distinguished Edomites are banished from the country. This furnishes Obadiah, a contemporary prophet in Jerusalem, an occasion for pronouncing Yahweh's judgment upon the pride of Edom (*History of Israel*, English transl., Vol. II, pp. 159 f.).

Ewald's treatment, dividing the prophecy into an older and a younger portion, was a distinct advance, pointing the way to the solution of many difficulties in the Book of Obadiah. He has been closely followed by Kuenen, who is not so definite in the date of the older piece, and who has with slight variation from Ewald's position fixed the point of division at the end of vs. 9, and the date of the younger prophet some time after the return from the captivity in 536. In substantial agreement with him are Cornill, Wildeboer, Driver, Selbie in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, and others.

Koenig (*Einleitung*) differs somewhat from Kuenen, inasmuch as he considers 16*a*, 18, 19*a*, 20*b* parts of the pre-exilic piece.

The principal reasons offered for the partition are: (1) The enemies of Edom in vss. 1-9 are the nations who are aroused by Yahweh to execute vengeance upon their former friend and ally, whereas according to vss. 15 ff., the judgment proceeds from Yahweh, and Israel is the instrument for its execution. (2) Vss. 1-9 represent Edom's chief sin as his pride and defiance of Yahweh himself because of reliance upon his stronghold, while in the latter part of the book the punishment is visited solely because of his treacherous conduct against his brother nation, Judah. (3) The literary style of the two parts is entirely different. The first, abounding in striking figures, rich in thought, and concise in statement, is full of life and action; but the second, in marked contrast, is lacking in ideas, as well as vigor of expression.

Wellhausen made a valuable contribution to the solution of the problem, when he established the main division in vs. 15. Vss. 6, 7*d*-9, 12, he considers as secondary, and sees the occasion for the remainder of vss. 1-14, 15*b* in the driving of the Edomites out of their home by the Arabian tribes of the south some time after the first half of the fifth century B. C. Vss. 15*a*, 16-21 were added at a still later date not definitely fixed. Wellhausen's position has been accepted by the commentators, Nowack and Marti, also by Cheyne in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*. In vss. 1-7 Wellhausen and Nowack see not prediction, but a record of past events; while Marti thinks of history in the making, "a prophetic estimate of Edom's conquest being enacted in the present." G. A. Smith grants Wellhausen's claim that the seventh verse of Obadiah refers to the expulsion of the Edomites by the Arabs in the sixth or fifth century B. C., but maintains the pre-exilic origin of vss. 1-6. "Vss. 8-9 form a difficulty," because they return to the future tense. Smith sees no difficulty in the way of dating the remainder of the book in the years following the destruction of Jerusalem, and thinks it not improbable that the prophet was an eye-witness of that awful time. Among those who have followed Ewald's lead in dividing the book into an older and a younger portion, but who have proposed decidedly unique treatments, may be mentioned Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, zweite Reihe, Band III (1900), pp. 425-57, and Sievers. Winckler brings the older piece, which consists of vss. 1-18, with the exception of the last clause of vss. 11, 13, 17*b*, into connection with an unsuccessful revolt of Jerusalem under Darius, at which time he supposes that Jerusalem was destroyed by the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, under orders from the Persian king as a punishment for participation in

the Ionic uprising about 500 B. C. But this destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Edomites is purely imaginary, and, as Marti says, is nothing but mere conjecture.

Sievers in his "Alttestamentliche Miscellen," No. 7, published in *Berichte ueber die Verhandlungen der Koeniglich-Saechsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig: Philologisch-historische Klasse*, Band XXIX (1907), gives the Book of Obadiah a peculiar and original treatment based upon his theory that all the poetry of the Old Testament is written in the anapestic meter. He divides the material into four sections: I: 3bc, 4, 5da, 2, 3a, 6, 7; II: 1bca, 10a, 11-14, 15b; III: 16-18; IV: 19-21. I consists of pentapodies; II is made up of heptapodies; III is a series of four heptapodies, each, with the exception of the last, followed by a tripod; while IV contains heptapodies only. In addition to the changes noted above, he removes a few glosses from the text, and makes some other minor alterations which it is not necessary to notice here; but his proposition to drop the **לֹא** from each of the eight prohibitions in vss. 12-14, and unite the conjunction with the verb as a *waw*-conjunctive is in opposition to all principles of sober criticism. Our present text could never have arisen from the reading which he proposes. It is true that dittographies and other mistakes in copying sometimes occasion trouble; but here we are asked to believe that something of the kind has happened in each of eight consecutive clauses, and the same thing in every case, changing a very easy reading into one of such difficulty that it has given commentators no end of trouble. The removing of 3a to the beginning of vs. 6 is a change for the worse; for the clause does not fit well into its new context, whereas in its present position in the **MT** it gives peculiar force to the poet's thought that Edom's pride of heart is caused by his inaccessible habitation. An equally serious objection to the change is that it leaves the participles of the remainder of the verse hanging in the air without a subject. Furthermore, Sievers in his effort to give each line the requisite number of feet sometimes works havoc with the parallelism, which is generally recognized as one of the characteristic features of Hebrew poetry, as may be seen from his arrangement of vss. 12-14:¹

And you gloated over your brother in the day of his adversity, and rejoiced over the sons of Judah

¹ In Hebrew his lines run:

וּתְרָא בְּאַחֶיךָ בְּיוֹם נִכְרִי וְתִשְׁמַח לְבְנֵי יְהוּדָה
 בְּיוֹם אָבְדָם וְתִגְדֹּל פִּיךָ וְתִבְרָא בְּשֹׁעַר עַמִּי
 בְּיוֹם אֵידָם וְתִרָא גַם אֶתָּה בִּרְעִתּוֹ בְּיוֹם אֵידוֹ
 וְתִשְׁלַח <אֶת יָדְךָ> בְּחִילוֹ וְתַעֲמִיד עַל הַפֶּקֶד לְהַכְרִית אֶת פְּלִיטוֹ
 - * * - * * - * * וְתִסְגֹּר שְׂרִידָיו בְּיוֹם צָרָה

In the day of their destruction and uttered proud words and entered the gate of
 my people
 In the day of their calamity, and you gloated, even you, over his injury in the
 day of his calamity,
 And you put forth your hand upon his wealth, and you stood upon the crossway
 to cut off his fugitives,
 And you delivered up his survivors in the day of distress,

He has dropped "in the day of his distress"¹ at the end of vs. 12, and "in the day of his calamity"² from the close of vs. 13, and has a gap of three feet at the end of vs. 14, although the section does not close with that verse. If these heptapodies which ignore the parallelism for the sake of the meter are contrasted with the perfect parallelisms of the *qinah*-verses offered in the lines of the Massorites, it is easy to see that the arrangement of Sievers is not that of the prophet. In the *MT* emphasis is put upon "the day of his calamity," or "distress," or "destruction" at the end of each line, with the exception of 14a, which is out of place here; but in the proposed grouping of feet all these fine touches of the poet are lost. His division, on metrical grounds, of vss. 16-21 into two sections, 16-18 and 19-21, does not commend itself; for when the recognized glosses are removed and the text put in order, his whole scheme falls to the ground. We see no good reason for departing from the general view which regards the rest of the book from vs. 17 to the end, aside from explanatory glosses, as from one hand. Vs. 16 is no part of the original text, as we shall see below.

Another thing which arouses suspicion that Sievers is doing violence to the language in the interest of a theory is the number of syllables,³ sometimes five, sometimes four long ones, which he forces into a single anapest.

J. M. P. Smith, "The Structure of Obadiah," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* (January, 1906), pp. 131-38, while agreeing with Wellhausen, Nowack, and Marti on most points, makes a new departure by athetizing vss. 12-14. In the meantime the unity of Obadiah has had its defenders. Hitzig refers "the captives of this fortress" to the Jews carried away into Egypt and settled there in fortresses by Ptolemy Lagi, 312 B. C. (Josephus, *Arch.*, XII, 1, 1; *contra Apion*, II, 4). In the "report" of vs. 1 he sees an allusion to the command for an expedition against Petra, which was given by Antigonus immediately after Ptolemy

¹ ביום צרה

² ביום אידר

³ יהיה שריד and ובית עשו, ובית יוסה, את-מורשיהם are good illustrations from vss. 17 and 18.

had wasted the Palestinian coast. Hitzig supposes that the author of Obadiah was one of the captives and that he wrote his prophecy in a castle in Egypt. He was the first scholar to assign so late a date for the entire prophecy, making no distinction between early and late. Nowack brings a valid objection against Hitzig's view from the fact that at that time the Edomites were no longer in possession of Petra.

Caspari, Delitzsch, Keil, Orelli, Kirkpatrick, Peters, and others consider the whole of Obadiah pre-exilic in its origin. The most of those who take this position see the occasion for the prophecy in the capture and plundering of Jerusalem by the Philistines and Arabians under Jehoram, recorded in II Chron. 21:16 f. But this supposition renders impossible a satisfactory explanation of vss. 11-14, which are almost universally recognized as referring to the sacking of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans aided by the Edomites. Few of Peters' twenty-five or thirty parallels to prove the unity of authorship are of any value; for they are, almost without exception, within sections which no one had ever thought of dividing, or of such a character that they might be matched in any passage of equal length. The historical method has made this view untenable. The historical method of interpretation which proceeds upon the supposition that the prophet's sermon always contains a message for his own day necessitates the division of the book into at least two parts.

Although we can accept the view of Wellhausen, Nowack, and Marti that the main division comes in vs. 15, still we cannot follow them in making vss. 1-7 a record of past events, or even of things just transpiring, and at the same time consider vss. 1-14, 15b with the exception of 6 and 7d-9 a unit. For the Edomites, suffering the disasters recorded in vss. 1-7, would hardly be in a state of mind or in position to commit the crimes against which they are warned in vss. 12-14. Again, the penalty is still in the future (vs. 15): "as you have done, so shall it be done to you." Nothing is gained by regarding with Marti the imperfects of this verse as presents: "Your deed is returning upon your own head," for we are immediately confronted with the prohibitions in vss. 12-14. This brings us to a difficulty in the way of making vs. 11 and vss. 12-14 parts of the same piece; for in the latter the prophet is looking to the future, and the tenses of the former make it equally certain that the events described in that verse are in the past. The statements of vs. 11 make known the part which the Edomites took with the Babylonians against the Jews when the city of Jerusalem was captured. The prohibitions in the three following verses are directed against what the Edomites were doing, or were about

to do when the prophet appeared, who here makes an earnest protest against their conduct.

It will not do, in defiance of the laws of the language, to render "You should not have looked . . . should not have entered," etc., as is done by Mercer, Grotius, Ewald, Winckler, and others, an interpretation which has found its way into Koenig's *Syntax*, 1906, where he says, "The **אַל תִּרְאֶה** of Obad., vss. 12-14 in a context of the past with 'and' would mean 'And you ought not to have'" This is in substantial agreement with Rashi and Kimchi, who render "It was not for you to look," and with Aben Ezra's "It was not fitting that you look." But all these propositions are to be rejected, because no one of their advocates is able to produce a single example of such usage, Koenig's rule being based upon this passage alone.

Others feeling the grammatical difficulty in the way of the above renderings have various devices for saving these verses for the past. Hitzig, Nowack, G. A. Smith, Marti, and some others have supposed that the prophet, in vivid realization of Edom's crime, has projected himself into the scenes of the past, and is speaking from an imaginary standpoint, prohibiting what has already been done—a thing of which there is not a hint in the text. Johannes thinks that the warning is sarcastic. But all this seems to be a makeshift unsupported by anything found elsewhere in the prophets, to avoid an apparent difficulty, and so is no less objectionable than the position of those who put the prophet before the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and have him predict not only the punishment of Edom, but also the crimes for which he suffers it. Both alike abandon the historical method of interpretation, and upon a priori grounds inject into the language of the prophet an unnatural, not to say impossible, meaning. **לֵאמֹר** with the imperfect must refer to the future. If vs. 7 is a record of history, past or in the making, vss. 12-14 cannot be a continuation of vss. 1-11; for in that case the Edomites would be warned against doing that which for them was impossible. If vss. 1-7 contain a prediction based upon a movement among the nations threatening the destruction of the Edomites, the prophet might upbraid them for their crimes and preach judgment in view of the impending calamity; but the time for warnings such as are found in vss. 12-14 would then be past. For syntactical reasons we cannot consider vss. 1-11 and 12-14 parts of the same poem. Furthermore, vss. 1-11 are composed in the trimeter movement, while vss. 12-14 are in the *qinah*-meter. J. M. P. Smith is right in athetizing vss. 12-14; for they are from a different author, or at least written on a different occasion from that of vss. 1-11.

Vss. 12-14 form an independent section, but they have received some additions since leaving the pen of their author. Vs. 14a¹ in the position which it occupies in the **MT** is peculiar in that it departs from all the other *qinah*-verses of the series in which it is found; for the second member of each consists of "in the day of," followed by a genitive expressing misfortune or disaster, which in the line under consideration is missing. Again, the order of the thought presents a serious difficulty, because in 14a "his escaped ones" have been "cut off," while in 14b the Edomites are exhorted not to "deliver up his survivors." There can be little doubt that originally the line immediately followed vs. 11, and that after the displacement was made **ל** was inserted between the **ו** and the verb, that the beginning might conform to that of the other lines of the series. If it is restored to this place, the sequence of thought is all that could be desired.

It is evident that 13b is a variant of 12a, a conclusion which I had reached and recorded in manuscript before I read J. M. P. Smith's "Structure of Obadiah;" but it is unnecessary to make the sweeping changes proposed in these verses by Winckler, Wellhausen, Nowack, and Marti, who regard the two as variants of one and the same verse. For if 13b² is rejected as a dittography of 12a, and 14a is restored to its proper position at the end of vs. 11, what remains makes a good strophe of six lines in the *qinah*-meter.

The causal clauses in vss. 15 and 16 are not easy to dispose of in the present arrangement of the text, as may be seen from the many efforts to give the passage an intelligible meaning. Drusius and Rosenmueller made the **כִּי** of 15a refer back to the statement "cut off forever" at the end of vs. 10; Caspari supposed the **כִּי** of 15a and that of 16a to be co-ordinate, and that these two verses give the reason for the warnings found in vss. 12-14; but Mercer would have 16a refer to 15a. But none of these treatments can be called satisfactory; for we have either: (1) a sudden change, without warning, from Edomites to Jews in the persons addressed (Aben Ezra, G. A. Smith, and others), or (2) we must understand "drink"

¹ It is interesting to note that Symmachus had τὰς φυγάδας αὐτοῦ (Field's Hexapla), i. e., "bands of fugitives," in the place of **הַפָּרֶק**, so there is a bare possibility that the latter word arose from a dittography of **פְּלִיטִי** which now appears after the infinitive, and that **בְּיוֹם** has dropped out. In that case we should restore the line as follows: **וְאֵל תַּעֲמִד עַל פְּלִיטִי בְּיוֹם הַכְּרָתוֹ**. But as all the other ancient versions support the Hebrew text, this course has little in its favor, and the line is to be removed from its present position. The "fugitive bands" of Symmachus may have been an attempt on his part to translate **הַפָּרֶק**.

² In **אֵל תְּרֵא** vs. 13b has preserved the correct reading; for the **ו** is without meaning at the beginning of the section, and if we reject it, each tristich of the strophe will begin with the simple **אֵל**.

in 16*a* to refer to the reveling of the Edomites, and in 16*b* to the punishment which all nations suffer on the day of Yahweh (Rashi, Kimchi, Hitzig, Peters, and others), or (3) the perfect שְׂתִיחַם in 16*a* must be explained of the future punishment of the Edomites (Happach, Pusey, and others), all of which is forced and unnatural. To avoid the difficulty in (1), Winckler suggests the reading יִשְׂאוּ הַשְּׂתִיחַם for שְׂתִיחַם יִשְׂאוּ , translating "For as ye have destroyed my holy mountain, so shall all nations be destroyed." But this still leaves us without an explanation of the fact that, while hitherto Edom has appeared in the singular only, now for the first time the nation is addressed in the plural. Moreover, the nations in vss. 1-14 are the agents under Yahweh for the destruction of Edom, but now in the day of the Lord they perish together with Edom in the judgment. Again, as Nowack points out, a contrast between Edomites reveling on Mount Zion and the heathen drinking the cup of Yahweh's wrath gives no intelligible meaning. Wellhausen, followed by Nowack, Marti, and J. M. P. Smith, proposes to put 15*b* before 15*a* and let it end the section, joining 15*a* with 16 ff. In that case we have at the beginning of a piece the second person plural without any vocative to indicate who are addressed. If it is assumed that it is the Jews, then the Jews are contrasted with all the nations, including Edom, who drink and perish utterly. Edom has become as if he had not been, while in marked contrast there is an escaped remnant in Mount Zion. After Edom has been completely annihilated in Yahweh's judgment upon the heathen in vs. 16, why introduce him in vs. 18 to be again consumed by Jacob? In this entire piece, aside from vs. 16, the interest is confined to Jacob's victory over Edom, and the regaining of his territory and dominion. This verse is a disturbing element, having no vital connection with any other part of the prophecy. It is a later addition, and may have been suggested by Jer. 49:12; or 25:15-17. If we remove it from the text, transfer 17*b* to the beginning of vs. 19, as both form and subject-matter indicate, and eliminate a few explanatory glosses, the thought of the piece flows on without interruption from beginning to end. The same hand that inserted vs. 16 may have added "upon all nations" to 15*a*; for with this single exception, the prophet is interested in the destruction of Edom only. Furthermore, it overburdens the line which is a perfect trimeter without it.

Beginning with vs. 7*d* the viewpoint is entirely different from that of the preceding portion of the book. The third person takes the place of direct address. We have sometimes, it is true, a sudden change from the second person to the third, when the prophet under the influence of excitement

gives utterance to an exclamation. But here, apparently without reason, such a change is sustained through six lines. How abrupt the transition from "They have driven thee to the border," etc., to "There is no understanding in him! In that day, is the oracle of Yahweh, 'I will destroy wise men from Edom, and understanding from Mount Esau.'" Wellhausen and others who follow him are undoubtedly right in regarding vss. 7d-9 as an interpolation. But we see no sufficient reason for regarding vs. 6 as spurious. The arguments offered against it do not seem to us valid. There is little force to Marti's objection to its genuineness on the ground that in vs. 7 the disaster that overtakes Edom is not a plundering but a driving-out, inasmuch as he retains vs. 5, which forcibly calls the attention to stealing and plundering. Wellhausen, Nowack, and Marti condemn vs. 6 as a gloss, because of the use of the third person for Edom, although, both before and after, the nation is addressed. But in a case like this the change of person is too common to excite wonder. A good example is found in Isa. 1:21a, in which the prophet injects the exclamation, "How has the faithful city become a harlot!" into the middle of an address to Jerusalem. Even Marti himself (*Kurzer Hand-Commentar*) sees nothing irregular in this passage. For numerous other illustrations see Koenig's *Stilistik*, pp. 238 ff. So we retain the verse with Kuenen, G. A. Smith, Winckler, J. M. P. Smith, and others.

We are now prepared to sum up the results of our investigation. We find that the Book of Obadiah, to say nothing of glosses, consists of three well-defined sections: (A) vss. 1-7c, 10, 11, 14a, 15b; (B) vss. 12, 13ac, 14b; (C) vss. 15a (15b), 17a, 18, 17b, 19-21; and two interpolations: (X) vss. 7d-9; (Y) vs. 16. They all have Edom as their object and this fact is their common bond of union. The vision of Obadiah, as we have it in the **MT**, is not a unit, but a collection of oracles against this unnatural brother of Judah. The basis of the book is section A. Some collector of the oracles of Obadiah has inserted B between vss. 11 and 14, entering it as a protest against the conduct of Edom described in the former verse, and in a subsequent copying 14a and 14b exchanged places. For such transposition see vs. 5 compared with Jer. 49:9. The author of C using A and B as the foundation of his own message, begins his poem immediately after the protest of vss. 12-14, with verse 15a, "For the day of Yahweh is near," and saves 15b as a part of his own work. When or by whom X and Y were interpolated, it is impossible to say. Copying or recopying with the dittographies, glosses and displacements has resulted in the text of the Massorites. For further discussion of details, see textual criticism under the various sections, and the appended notes at the close.

A. THE VISION OF OBADIAH CONCERNING EDMOM

In fixing the date of this piece (vss. 1-7c, 10, 11, 14a, 15b), our only source of information is the prophecy itself. A careful reading reveals the fact that behind the author is a capture of Jerusalem the details of which are still fresh in his memory, embittering him against the Edomites because they identified themselves with the enemy in plundering the city, and, stationing themselves at suitable points along the lines of flight, cut down the fleeing Jews as they were trying to make their escape.

Four captures of Jerusalem are recorded in the Old Testament. The first of these by Shishak mentioned in I Kings 14:25 f., no one brings into connection with our prophecy; for the Edomites remained in subjection to Judah and had nothing to do with it. As foreigners are the principal actors (Obad., vs. 11), the conquest under Amaziah, when Joash of Israel broke down four hundred cubits of the wall of Jerusalem and plundered the treasures of the temple and the palace, is excluded. Delitzsch, Keil, Orelli, Kirkpatrick, and others have thought of the statement in II Chron. 21:16 f. as furnishing the historical background for Obadiah. The determining factor in this hypothesis is the supposition that the relation of Jer. 49:7-22 to Obadiah in which the more original form of the prophecy appears makes impossible the dating of our book later than the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (Jer. 46:1 f.), and so of necessity there can be no thought of the capture of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar. But inasmuch as it is now recognized that chaps. 46-49 of Jeremiah in their present form are very late (Stade, Schwally, Smend, Wellhausen, Nowack, and others), and since the proof-passage from Chronicles makes no mention of the Edomites, there is nothing to be said in favor of this position.

The only sacking of the city that will satisfy all the conditions, and especially the part taken by the Edomites, is the one by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in the war that ended with the breaking-up of the nation and its captivity. Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti, and others think that this is the only situation into which our piece will fit. Marti says that the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans can be the only one meant. The conduct of Edom at that time called forth the bitter denunciations of other writers of the Old Testament (Ps. 137:7; Ezek., chaps. 35 and 36; Lam. 4:22).

Another factor entering the problem is the impending humbling of the proud Edomites who rely upon their impregnable stronghold. At the

call of Yahweh's messenger the nations are already rising, and Edom is to be cut off forever because of violence done his brother nation, Judah. This, however, is denied by Wellhausen and Nowack who insist that we have in this section a record of past events and not a statement of something yet to be realized in the expectation of the prophet. In support of this view are offered the perfects in vss. 1-7 and the detailed statements in vs. 7. But a series of perfects describing future events is common enough in prophetic literature, and picturesque descriptions entering into details, such as are offered in vs. 7, are not without parallels in the imaginative language of the Old Testament prophets. The predictive element of Isa. 9:1-6a is not called into question, although the prophet with a single exception uses the perfect or its equivalent throughout. There seem to be insuperable difficulties in the way of this position of Wellhausen's; for both syntax and subject-matter are in opposition to it; so it is practically abandoned by Marti, who considers our piece a prophetic estimate of events just transpiring when the prophet appears. The objections to this view are: (1) The natural explanation of the rising of the nations (vs. 1) is that they may in the future execute the decree of Yahweh. (2) The condition in vs. 4 looks to the future and would have little or no meaning, if Edom had already been brought down. (3) Had the prophet been looking back upon the past conquest of Edom, we should expect in the apodosis of his contrary-to-fact conditions not the imperfect but the perfect. (4) This calamity overtakes the Edomites as a punishment because of their sin against a brother nation (vs. 10), and that penalty has not yet been visited, but is still in the future (vs. 15), "as you have done, it shall be done to you; your deed shall return upon your own head."

History has very little information to give on the driving of the Edomites out of their land. In 312 B. C. their territory was in possession of the Nabataeans (Diodorus, XIX, 94), and had already become a desolation more than a century earlier, when the Book of Malachi was written; so Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti, and others put the prophecy in the first half of the fifth century B. C. This is done upon the assumption that the actual driving-out of the Edomites was the occasion of our prophecy and that this took place about the beginning of that century. So far as definite proof is concerned, there is none. But if we knew just when they were expelled from their country (unfortunately we know nothing about it), it would not necessarily fix the date of vss. 1-7. If Edom was ripe for judgment, our only question is: Was there a movement among the nations to give point to such a message? It does not concern us to know whether the Edomites, when they were banished from their home-land, were driven

out in just the manner here described or not. It is not necessary to suppose that such an attack ever took place in the time of our prophet.

It is a recognized probability that the movement of the Scythians in the north called out Zephaniah with his message of judgment upon Jerusalem, although the expected punishment of Judah never came from that source. The same uprising of that wild people was the occasion of the earlier oracles of Jeremiah. While the predicted judgment of Yahweh upon the sinful nation did not fail, the agents in its execution, when it came, were not the Scythians, but the Babylonians, a generation after the time of the message. In Isa. 10:28-32 the prophet gives an imaginary and picturesque description of the march of the Assyrian upon Jerusalem, entering into details. He expects him to make his way through the cities and passes of the north, one after the other, until he reaches Judah's capital. But when Sennacherib invaded the country, he came not over the course seen in the vision of the prophet, but from the southwest. To take one more example, that recorded in Isa., chap. 13, Yahweh marshals his hosts in the mountains, there is a slaughtering of men, plundering of houses, and dishonoring of women; for he has stirred up the Medes against Babylon for the purpose of making that proud city an everlasting desolation. As a matter of fact, Babylon passed into the hands of Cyrus without a struggle and remained intact.

For the expulsion of the Edomites our sources leave open the period from 586 B. C. to the writing of Malachi around 450 B. C. without a hint as to when or how it was done. The numerous citations above from the prophets prove that in fixing the date of our piece we need not know when these enemies of the Jews were forced out of their territory. The prophet's vivid recollection of the scenes connected with the capture and destruction of Jerusalem favors a time very soon after that terrible calamity had overtaken him and his fellow-countrymen. So we have only to inquire whether soon after the fall of Jerusalem there was an uprising or commotion among the nations to furnish occasion for vss. 1-7. Josephus tells us (*Ant.*, X, 9) that five years after the destruction of Judah's capital, Nebuchadrezzar invaded Coele-Syria and made war upon the Moabites and Ammonites. Ewald (*History of Israel*, Vol. IV, p. 277, English transl.) accepts the historicity of this statement and sees a confirmation of it in Jer. 52:30, and Ezek., chap. 21 (20:45-21:32), and we may add that the part played by Baalis, king of the Ammonites, against Gedaliah was an act of war against Babylon which Nebuchadrezzar would not be likely to overlook. This rising of the Moabites and Ammonites would give the prophet an occasion for his message against the Edomites, and would make possible the treachery of

their allies, the neighboring Arabs, seen in his vision. There is no reason for considering this section a historical sketch; for the prophet might well draw upon his imagination for every statement in it. It was no new thing in the Semitic world of that time for allies to prove false and disappoint the expectations of those who relied upon them. Edom in his invincible fortresses may not be overcome by force of arms; but treachery of allies professing friendship may entice him from his strongholds and cause his destruction.

This section consists of five strophes, each containing six lines, with the exception of the last, which is made up of eight. Every strophe makes its special contribution to the thought of the poem. In strophe I, Yahweh, through his messenger, summons the nations against Edom, humbles him, and brings him into contempt. Strophe II gives a lively description of Edom filled with pride, relying upon his rocky fortress and bidding defiance to heaven itself, but brought low in spite of his inaccessible habitation. Strophe III pictures the fearful devastation wrought by the enemy while in strophe IV former friends and allies drive him from his land. Strophe V justifies the judgment of Yahweh by citing Edom's part in plundering Jerusalem, and in the slaying of her fugitives. The two closing lines call attention to the main thought, declaring that the coming disaster is a righteous retribution visited upon the Edomites who are to be paid in their own coin.

חזון עבדיה
לאדום¹
שמועה שמענו² מאת יהיה³ I I
וציר בגוים שלח
התקבצו³ ובאו עליה⁴
וקומו למלחמה

¹ כה אמר אדני יהיה is a stereotyped expression often used in prophecy, but not suitable here, because what follows would have no meaning in the mouth of Yahweh. It is to be removed as secondary with Nowack, Marti, and others.

² The LXX reads with Jer. 49:14 שמעתי instead of שמענו, but the latter as the more difficult reading is to be retained. The prophet represents his people as hearing the report along with himself.

³ In this and the following line Jeremiah has preserved the better reading; for, as J. M. P. Smith has pointed out, the one line of Obadiah is too long, is repetitious, and lacks the descriptive quality of Jeremiah.

⁴ It is unnecessary to read עליה with Wellhausen, Marti, and others, as the prophet may have had in mind the country of Edom, as in Jer. 49:14.

- 2 הנה קטן נתחיד בגוים
בזוי אתה באדם¹
- 3 II זרון לבך השיאך
שכני בחגוי סלע
מרים² שבתו אמר בלבו
מי יורדני ארץ
4 אם תגביה כנשר קנך³
משם אורידך נאם יהוה
- 5b III אם בצירים באו לך⁴
הלוא ישאירו עללות
אם גנבים באו לך 5a
הלוא יגנבו דים
6 איך נחפשו עשו⁵
נבעו מצפוניו
- 7 IV עד הגבול שלחוך
כל אנשי בריתך השיאוך
יכלו לך אנשי שלמך
שימו מזור תחתיד⁶

¹ Read מאד for באדם, as in Jer. 49:15, because of the parallel (Nowack, Selbie, Marti, J. M. P. Smith).

² Read with the Greek, Syriac, Vulgate, and Nowack מרים; Marti who thinks that מרים שבתו is much better than the circumstantial תפשי מרום גבעה of Jeremiah. Furthermore, מרים שבתו makes a fine parallelism in thought to תגביה קנך.

³ אם בין כוכבים שים which is not found in the parallel passage of Jeremiah betrays its secondary character by leaving תגביה without an object (J. M. P. Smith).

⁴ The text of Obadiah in vs. 5, with its additions, is inferior to that of Jer. 49:9, which enables us to set the verse in order. Omit אם שורדני לילה as a gloss on אם גנבים; also איך נדמיתה which is out of place here (Wellhausen, Condamin, Cheyne, Nowack, Sievers, J. M. P. Smith), and transpose a and b (Sievers, J. M. P. Smith).

⁵ Wellhausen, followed by Nowack and Marti, omits vs. 6 from the text as a later addition, but the reasons are insufficient and the text may stand. See Introduction.

⁶ Wellhausen and many others regard לחמד which is not found in the Greek as a corrupt dittography of שלמך. Omit with Wellhausen, Cheyne, Nowack, Marti, and others אין תבונה בו, as meaningless in this place.

מַחֲמָס אַחִיד תִּכְסֵּךְ בּוֹשָׁה¹ 10
וְנִכְרַת לְעוֹלָם

בְּיוֹם עֲמֻדָּךְ מִנִּגְדָּךְ² 11 V
וְנִכְרִים בָּאוּ שְׂעִירוֹ
וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַם יָדוּ גּוֹרֵל
גַּם אֶחָדָה כָּאֶחָד מֵהֶם
וְחִעַמְדָּ עַל הַפֶּרֶק 14a
לְהַכְרִית³ אֶת פְּלִיטָיו
כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ יַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ 15b
גַּמְלֶךְ יִשׁוּב בְּרָאשׁךְ

THE VISION OF OBADIAH CONCERNING EDOM

I

We have heard a report from Yahweh,
For a messenger has been sent among the nations:
"Gather yourselves together, and come against her,
And rise up for the battle."
Behold I have made you small among the nations.
Despised are you among men.

II

The pride of your heart has deceived you,
Dwelling in the retreats of the rock,
Setting his habitation on high, saying in his heart,
Who can bring me down to the ground?
Though you make your nest high like the eagle,
From there will I bring you down, is the oracle of Yahweh.

III

If grape-gatherers came to you,
Would they not leave gleanings?
If thieves came unto you,

¹ Vss. 8 and 9, including מַקְטֵל which the LXX joins with vs. 10, are regarded as an interpolation by Wellhausen, Nowack, G. A. Smith, Marti, and others, so vs. 7 is immediately followed by vs. 10. For the sake of the meter, drop with J. M. P. Smith יַעֲקֹב which is an inserted comment on אַחִיד. Remove from the text מַקְטֵל as a gloss on מַחֲמָס (Nowack, Marti, J. M. P. Smith).

² We follow J. M. P. Smith in rejecting בְּיוֹם שְׁבוּת זָרִים חִילוֹ as a prosaic marginal note, because it introduces the carrying away of the spoils before the entrance into the city and the division of the booty.

³ For the position of vs. 14a immediately after vs. 11, see Introduction.

Would they not steal what sufficed them?
 How is Esau plundered!
 His hidden treasures how searched out!

IV

Even to the boundary have they sent you;
 All your allies have deceived you;
 Men at peace with you have prevailed over you,
 Placing under you a net.
 Because of violence done your brother shame shall cover you,
 And you shall be cut off forever.

V

In the day when you stood in opposition,
 And strangers entered his gate,
 And cast lots over Jerusalem,
 Even you were as one of them;
 And you stood at the crossway
 To cut off his fugitives.
 As you have done so shall it be done to you;
 Your dealing shall return upon your own head.

B. THE PROPHET'S PROTEST

In section B (vss. 12, 13a, c, 14b) are found echoes of events which we know from other Old Testament writers took place at the fall of Jerusalem and soon afterward. The Edomites who took part in the plundering of the city are still pressing into the territory of the Jews, taking possession of their property and cutting off the fugitives, or delivering them into the hands of their enemies. Although they had been allies of the Jews early in the war which broke up the kingdom of Judah (Jer. 27:3), the Edomites later made common cause with the enemy, taking vengeance (Ezek. 25:12) because they had once borne the yoke of Judah (II Kings 14:7, 22; 16:6). We may read their satisfaction over the downfall of their neighbors, their taunts and jeers, the eagerness with which they enter the land to take possession, and their deeds of violence, in Ezek. 36:5; 35:13, 10, 5. The "day" which receives so much emphasis in this little poem, recurring at the end of every line with a genitive synonymous of disaster, recalls Ps. 137:7, in which the Psalmist fervently prays Yahweh to remember against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem; who said, "Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof." Another parallel to our passage and from the same period is "the time of their calamity," in Ezek. 35:5. The neighbors of the Jews in the day of their disaster pressed into the country to enrich themselves with what was left of their goods (Stade, *Geschichte*, Vol. I, p. 694), and predatory bands of guerrillas would be doing the very things

against which the prophet protests in vss. 12-14. So there is no period of Old Testament history into which this piece will fit so well as the years immediately after the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans.

These verses written in the *qinah*-meter form a well-balanced strophe of two tristichs each containing a climax and ending with the refrain, "day of distress." In the first the prophet conceives of the Edomites' hostility manifesting itself with ever-increasing intensity in three stages of development: (1) in looking upon the calamities of the brother nation with complacency and satisfaction; (2) in exulting over the children of Judah in their downfall; and (3) in giving outward expression to their feelings in words of scorn and derision. In the second the thought passes on to the violence done the property and person of the Jews.

12 אֶל תִּרְאֵהָ בְּאַחֶיךָ || בְּיוֹם נִכְרֹוּ
 וְאֵל תִּשְׂמַח לְבְנֵי יְהוּדָה || בְּיוֹם אָבָדָם
 וְאֵל תִּגְדֹּל פִּיךָ || בְּיוֹם צָרָה
 13 אֶל תְּבוֹא בְּשַׁעַר עַמִּי || בְּיוֹם אִידָם
 וְאֵל תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ || בְּחִילוֹ || בְּיוֹם אִידוֹ
 14b וְאֵל תִּסְגֵּר שְׂרִידָיו || בְּיוֹם צָרָה

¹ In 12a the **בְּיוֹם** of **בְּאַחֶיךָ** is a dittography (Winckler, Nowack, Marti, J. M. P. Smith).

² A discussion of some of the important changes in the **MT** of vss. 12-14 is to be found in the Introduction.

³ Read **תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ** with the Targum, Newcome, Henderson, Nowack, Marti, and others. Koenig (*Lehrgebäude*, Vol. I, pp. 285 f.), after a thorough discussion of the form, quotes with approval Olshausen, who says that the existing consonants were written by mistake for **תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ**. This appears to be the simplest and the best solution of the difficulty, although there is something to be said for the position of those who see in this form a variant of **תִּשְׁלַח נָא** and suppose that **שְׁלַח** is used as in II Sam. 6:6; 22:17 (=Ps. 18:17); so Peters, Buhl-Gesenius, J. M. P. Smith.

⁴ In 13c there is insufficient reason for changing **אִידָם** into **אָבָדָם** with Winckler, Nowack, and J. M. P. Smith, or into **אָבָדְךָ** with Marti, although the Greek does have *ἀπώλεας αὐτῶν*; for *ἀπώλεια* is a favorite rendering with the LXX for the Hebrew **אִיד**, and change in number of a pronominal suffix is common where the name of a person represents a nation. **אִיד** is found twenty-four times in the **MT**. In three cases at least the LXX evidently had another reading before them. Nine times they have *ἀπώλεια* as a translation (Deut. 32:35; Jer. 18:17; 46:21; Obad., vs. 13; Job 21:30; 30:12; 31:3; Prov. 1:26; 6:15), twice *καταστροφή* (Job 21:17; Prov. 1:27), and the remaining ten passages a different word in each case, all, however, containing the idea of "calamity," "disaster," "distress," or "defeat." It is true that they translate the end of both 12a and 13b by *ἀπώλεας αὐτῶν*, but the Vulgate has *perditionis eorum* in the former, and *vastitationis illius* in the latter, so the text may stand.

A VIGOROUS PROTEST AGAINST EDM'S TREATMENT OF THE JEWS IN THE DAY OF DISTRESS

Gloat not over your brother in the day of his adversity,
 And rejoice not over the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction,
 Nor utter proud words in the day of distress.
 Enter not the gate of my people in the day of their calamity,
 And lay no hand upon their wealth in the day of their calamity,
 Nor deliver up their survivors in the day of distress.

C. ISRAEL CONQUERS HIS HEREDITARY FOES, THE EDMITES, AND REGAINS HIS FORMER GLORY

From the hints given in vss. 15a, 17-21 the date of this oracle may be fixed with a considerable degree of certainty. When after the fall of Jerusalem could the prophet with such a message have carried his hearers with him? He is not looking for deliverance from without; but the people are fighting their own battles. He expects the people of God themselves will conquer their foes. His tone is very different from that of the *Great Prophet* of the Exile who hopes for salvation through Cyrus, "the anointed of Yahweh," whom he has raised up: "He shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free."

Soon after the return from the captivity, when the Jews are a poor people few in numbers, Haggai (2:6, 22) comes out with the promise that Yahweh will shake heaven and earth, overturn the throne of kingdoms, overthrow chariots and those who ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

In chaps. 34 and 63 of Isaiah we have two apocalyptic pictures of judgment upon Edom. In the one, Yahweh's sword drunk with wrath comes down from heaven, slaughters the Edomites, and makes their land an everlasting desolation. In the other, Yahweh, with the day of vengeance in his heart, treads the winepress alone—there is no man with him, none to help—he tramples the people in his anger, and pours out their life-blood upon the earth.

In the vision of Joel 4:9-13 (3:9-13), the nations are exhorted to prepare for war and come to the valley of Jehoshaphat, where Yahweh will enter into judgment with them. He gives his heavenly servants orders to put in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe and their wickedness is great. The Jews themselves take no part in the struggle.

The apocalyptic section of Isa., chaps. 24-27, pictures a general judgment upon the world, in which there is a complete dissolution of the present order of things. The people of God are to escape by hiding until Yahweh

visits upon the inhabitants of the earth punishment for their iniquity. Here Israel has nothing to do with his own deliverance.

In Zech., chaps. 9-14, about 280 B. C., the situation is nearly the same. Yahweh appears in battle above the sons of Zion and his arrows go forth like lightning in defense of them. He sends a plague upon all the nations that war against Jerusalem.

While there is not exact uniformity of view as to the date of all these pieces, it is recognized that they reflect the hopes and expectations of the Jewish people from the time of the captivity down to the early part of the Greek period of Old Testament history. In all of them relief comes from the raising-up of some hero outside the nation, or from revolution in the world-powers, or from the miraculous intervention of Yahweh in the affairs of men. For the first time after the Babylonians had broken up the nation, has a prophet represented the people as fighting their own battles and gaining their own victories. No place within four hundred years after the beginning of the Babylonian captivity can be found in which these conditions are satisfied. This brings us to the Maccabean age.

The most suitable background for our prophecy is the victory of Judas over Lysias in the fall of 165 B. C., when the latter came up from the south by the way of Idumea and suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Jewish general (Schuerer, I, i, p. 216). There can be no doubt that the Edomites, the relentless enemies of the Jews, took part in this war; for we find Judas soon after making an expedition against them. The repeated victories of Judas would prepare the people as well as the prophet for just such a message and give it peculiar force at that time; for these triumphs would lead them to expect the dawning of the *day of Yahweh* when all their enemies were to perish. The prophet, looking back upon the terrible persecution and slaughter under Antiochus Epiphanes five years before, which united in suffering the people of his own generation with their ancestors in the siege of Jerusalem and its capture by the Babylonians, would expect, in view of the present victories, a speedy fulfilment of the old oracle and make it the starting-point for his own words of comfort. By this time the apostate Jews would be in hiding, or be silenced. That is reason enough for their receiving no attention in this brief oracle.

This piece possesses no great literary merit. It lacks the animation of A, and the regular artistic form in which the lines of B appear is missing. The metrical scheme is irregular with lines varying from trimeter to tetrameter. It may, however, including vs. 15^{bc} which has been incorporated from the older poem, be divided into two well-defined strophes of ten lines each. In strophe I Israel brings utter destruction upon his old-time enemy,

Edom; in strophe II he gets possession of his former territory. The day of Yahweh is at hand, bringing just retribution upon the Edomites for their sin; for God's people of both kingdoms united, like flame devouring the stubble, make a complete end of their enemies, so that no survivor is left. After this triumph over their foes, with possessions regained, they ascend Mount Zion, now the seat of the united kingdom's capital, to rule over the territory once held by Edom, and Yahweh is king over all. At the beginning of each strophe the general statement is made, while what follows gives the details. The text has suffered in transmission, now containing many explanatory glosses, and is hopelessly corrupt. No one knows what is meant by "this army," or "this fortress;"¹ and what or where Sepharad² is, every scholar is free to guess, and has been since the time of the Septuagint translation, which has in its place Ephratha.

15^a I כי קרוב יום יהוה³
 15^b [כאשר עשית יעשה לך
 גמלך ישוב בראשך]
 17^a ובהר ציון תהיה פליטה⁴
 18 והיה בית יעקב אש
 ובית יוסף להבה
 ובית עשו לקש
 ודלקו בהם ואכלום
 ולא יהיה שריד לבית עשו
 כי יהוה דבר

17^b II וירשו בית יעקב את מורשיהם
 19 וירשו את נגב ואת השפלה⁵

¹ Hebrew, החל הזה.

² ספרד.

³ על כל הגוים makes the verse too long and may be from the hand that added vs. 16.

⁴ Marti and J. M. P. Smith reject והיה קדש for grammatical reasons; cf. Winckler. It may have been added from Joel 4:17; so Marti.

⁵ את הר עשו and את פלשתים are with Nowack and Marti to be removed as explanatory glosses. Negeb and Shephelah cannot be subjects of the verb, so את הר עשו and את פלשתים, each with the sign of the accusative, are seen to be explanations of the preceding words. The Negeb was in possession of the Edomites thus belonging to Mount Esau, and Hebron was an Idumean center at the time of the Maccabean struggles, I Mac. 4:29, 61; 5:65, and long before, cf. Ezek. 35:10-15; 36:5. The Philistines held the Shephelah, see Zech. 9:6; and the Maccabean wars (Stade, *Geschichte*, Vol. II, pp. 368 ff.).

¹ ואת שדה אפרים ואת הגלעד
²⁰ וגלת החל הזה לבני ישראל
³ ירשו ארץ כנען עד צרפת
 וגלת ירושלם אשר בספרד
 ירשו את ערי הנגב
²¹ ועלו נושעים⁴ בדרך ציון
 לשפט את הר עשו
 ויהיה ליהודה המלוכה

C. ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER HIS FOES AND RESTORATION TO HIS LAND

I

For near is the day of Yahweh.
 (As you have done, so shall it be done to you;
 Your dealing shall return upon your own head.)
 And in Mount Zion there shall be an escaped remnant,
 And the house of Jacob shall become a fire,
 And the house of Joseph a flame,
 And the house of Esau stubble,
 And they shall burn among them and consume them,
 So that there will be no survivor to the house of Esau.
 For Yahweh hath spoken it.

II

And the house of Jacob shall regain their possessions;
 For they shall possess the South Land and the Shephelah
 And the field of Ephraim and Gilead:
 And the captive Israelites of this army
 Shall possess the land of Canaan unto Zarephath,
 And the captives of Jerusalem which are in Sepharad
 Shall possess the cities of the South Land.
 And they shall ascend Mount Zion with salvation
 To judge Mount Esau;
 And the kingdom shall be Yahweh's.

¹ ירשו is a dittography from the line above, to be rejected for the sake of the meter.

² Since בית בנימין is already included in Ephraim, and בית יוסה and יעקב must be considered as no part of the original text; see Marti, who has followed Nowack.

³ Restore ירשו which has dropped out because of its likeness to the following אשר. Read ארץ for אשר after the LXX (Oort; Kittel's Hebrew Bible). As the plural of the gentilic noun כנעני is used elsewhere only once (Neh. 9:24) and then with the article, in apposition with "the inhabitants of the land," it is better to read כנען after Gen. 44:8; 46:31; 47:1, 4, 13, 14, 15; 50:5, and many other passages.

⁴ With the ancient Greek versions and the Syriac, read נושעים for מושעים. After the Jews have destroyed their enemies, they have no need of "saviors;" but "saved," that is as "victors," they ascend Mount Zion; cf. Zech. 9:6; Ps. 33:16.

X. VERSES 7d-9

¹ 7d (אין תבונה בו)
² 8 ביום ההוא נאם יהוה
אבידה חכמים מאדום
ותבונה מהר עשו
והתו³ גבורי תימן 9
למען יכרת איש מהר עשו

(There is no understanding in him.)
In that day, it is the oracle of Yahweh,
I will destroy wise men from Edom
And understanding from Mount Esau;
And the mighty men of Teman shall be dismayed,
That every one may be cut off from Mount Esau.

Y

¹⁶ כי כאשר שתיתם על הר קדשי
ישתו כל הגוים תמיד
ושתו⁴ ויהיו כלוא היו

For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain,
All nations shall drink continually;
They shall drink and perish and be as if they had not been.

¹ 7d, אין תבונה בו has every appearance of being a marginal comment upon the character of Edom, because through lack of discernment he trusted as friends and allies the enemies who have brought upon him sudden and unexpected ruin.

² The LXX notices neither the interrogative negative הלא, which may have come from vs. 5, nor the ך consecutive, translating the verb as a simple future. וה at the beginning of והאברתי is a dittography of the last two letters of יהוה. For the form אבידה compare Jer. 46:8. This reading of the LXX is much simpler than that of אש and in every way preferable.

³ Read התו for גבורי with Kittel's Bible, and Marti who considers the address to the Edomite country Teman thrown in between vss. 8 and 9b as altogether out of place.

⁴ For the reading ובלעו see appended note on vs. 16.

APPENDED NOTES

Vs. 7: **מִזּוֹר** is a troublesome word for which the ancient versions give various renderings. The BDB Lexicon derives it from the root **מָזַר** and offers "net" as a probable meaning. Winckler proposes to read **מִצּוֹר** for **מִזּוֹר** and for the verb of the **שָׁאֵן יִשָּׂא** rendering "take from thee thy nourishment." He derives the noun from the root **צִיר**, *Hithp.*, which means according to BDB Lexicon "supply self with provisions," Jos. 9:4 and 12. But if such noun exists, it is found here only, and there is some question about the use of the root in biblical Hebrew. Furthermore, after the proposed changes have been made, can the words have the meaning which he puts upon them? Marti objects to the translation "snare" as affording no suitable meaning here. He continues: "They lay snares under you; but Edom has already been driven over the boundary." He proposes to read **מִגּוֹר**, or, since it is not certain that **מִגּוֹר** has the meaning "dwelling," better **מְדוֹר**, which occurs in biblical Aramaic (Dan. 4:22, 29; 5:21), for the **מִזּוֹר** of the **שָׁאֵן**. He understands the clause to mean "they set up a habitation," or "settle in thy place," and adds the comment that the Arabs after driving out the Edomites settle in the land. But this clause with its verb **יִשְׁבּוּ** in the imperfect does not necessarily state what transpires after the events described in the preceding clauses of the verse, but may give attendant circumstances. See Marti's comment on Isa. 42:14 (*Kurzer Hand-Commentar*) and Driver's *Hebrew Tenses*, §163. It is not probable that the Aramaic **מְדוֹר** was the original reading; for apart from the late gloss **מִקְטֵל** the prophecy is entirely free from Aramaisms. J. A. Selbie suggests that the "snare" of the versions may be due to a reading **מִצּוֹר**, that is, "siege." For other translations and proposed emendations see BDB Lexicon. While not entirely satisfactory, nothing better than "net" has been proposed.

Vs. 12: **נִכְרִי** *ἡ παρὰ λεγόμενον* equals **נִכְרִי** in Job 31:3, from a root furnishing words in the other Semitic languages with a number of different meanings: in Assyrian, "rebel," "enemy;" Arabic, "evil," "change;" Sabeian, "reject," "injure;" Syriac, "reject;" Targum, "strange," "foreign" (BDB Lexicon). As a result there are several interpretations for the passage. Rashi understands "his day" to be the day when he is delivered into the hands of his "enemies." With Aben Ezra it is the day "strange" in his eyes. Some think of the "estrangement" of the people from their land by driving them out of it (Kimchi, Mercer, Pusey); or of God's being "estranged" from his people and rejecting them (Tarnovius, Schnurrer, Henderson). The LXX, Syriac, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret translate "day of foreigners" (perhaps reading **נִכְרִיִּים**), which according to Rosenmueller means when "foreigners invade the territory of the Israelites." But most scholars of today because of the parallelism have rightly decided for the meaning "misfortune," "calamity." Winckler proposes the

Niph'al infinitive construct נכרתו, citing the parallel infinitive אבדם at the end of vs. 12b in support of his reading. J. M. P. Smith follows Winckler because נכרו is ἀπαξ λεγόμενον and the LXX renders the last word of the variant line (vs. 13b) by δλέθρου αὐτῶν and this is the only occurrence in the Old Testament of δλεθρος as an equivalent of איר, which now stands in the MT of vs. 13b; but δλοθρεύω is the rendering for כרת in Judg. 6:25, 28, 30 and Num. 4:18. Hence the LXX's rendering of איר in vs. 13b and the נכרו of vs. 12a point to the *Niph'al* infinitive construct נכרתו as the original reading.

But it may be said in reply that the *Niph'al* infinitive construct of כרת with suffix is not נכרתו, but הכרתו which does not resemble נכרו quite so much as the form proposed; and, while ἀπόλεια which occurs nine times is the LXX's favorite rendering for איר, they have no fewer than eight other translations, all, however, containing the idea "destruction" or "disaster," for this same word, although it is found only twenty-four times in MT; so it is not strange that they should in rendering a passage like this, for the sake of variation, add one more synonym δλεθρος to their list. There does not seem to be sufficient reason for setting aside נכרו of vs. 12a in favor of הכרתו. נכרו, though rare, need give no serious trouble; for words from the same root are common enough in the Hebrew Bible. Even if their meaning is limited to "foreign," which seems to suit neither our passage nor Job 31:3, it is but a step from "foreign," "strange" to "adverse," "adversity" or "hostile," "hostility." Compare the Greek ἀλλότριος, "strange," "hostile;" the Latin *hostis*, "stranger," "enemy," *alienus*, "foreign," "adverse," "hostile," "perilous." "Calamity," the definition given by BDB, comes naturally from the root meaning "strange," and makes excellent sense both in Obad., vs. 12, and in Job 31:3.

Vs. 14: פרק is found elsewhere only in Nahum 3:1, where it has the meaning "plunder" which is not suitable here. Although Kimchi in his commentary defines it "mother of ways," i. e., "crossroads," and in the Book of Roots "heads of ways," in the latter he seems to favor a different interpretation; for he explains by שבר, i. e., "breaking," "slaughter," and compares Lev. 19:16, "Thou shalt not stand against the blood of thy neighbor." The LXX and the Vulgate were evidently thinking of places of escape, the former having διακβάδας, i. e., "passages out," "exits" (Sophocles, Greek Lexicon *sub voce*; cf. Diodorus XVII, 68, and Ezek. 48:30), and the latter *exitibus*: they have been followed by Winckler. The thought of the Syriac seems to have been "a place of refuge;" for its translation is مَفْصَلٌ which Brockelmann defines by *cuniculus*, that is "burrow," and in agreement with this is Happach's "caves." Henderson sees in the word under consideration a "pass" through the mountains, while Johannes takes it in a collective sense with the meaning "those who break through," "escape." פריץ, the conjecture of Graetz, is no improvement on MT. All of these are to be rejected for "parting of the ways," "crossroads," which has been accepted by the vast majority of scholars and which comes naturally from the meaning of the root פרק "tear apart, away."

Vs. 16: וּלְעִי. For the verbal forms in Obad., vs. 16; Job 6:3; Prov.

20:25, as well as for the noun לֶעֶ ("throat"), Prov. 23:2, the BDB Lexicon posits two roots spelled alike (לָעַע or לָעַע), but with different meanings: (1) "swallow," "swallow down;" (2) "talk wildly;" but Koenig maintains that a single root is sufficient for all these forms; see *Lehrgebäude*, § 34, 7, b. Wellhausen, Nowack, G. A. Smith, Marti, and J. M. P. Smith, in view of such passages as Isa. 24:20; 29:9; Ps. 107:27, read וְנָעוּ instead of וְלָעוּ. This verb then states the result of the drinking. They shall "stagger" or "reel" and come to naught. Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der Israelitisch-Juedischen Eschatologie*, p. 132, reads וְעָלָו, transposing the letters, and compares the Arabic عَال. His translation of 16b runs: *werden alle Voelker bestaendig trinken, trinken und wieder trinken, und sein, als waeren sie nie gewesen*. See Lane's Arabic Lexicon *sub voce*: "drink again after drinking, uninterruptedly." This gives a good meaning without making any radical change in the אָע, but does not account for the ancient versions. In place of the word under consideration the LXX¹ have "they shall go down;" the Vulgate² and Arabic³ both render "shall swallow down;" the Syriac⁴ uses two verbs to translate this one, "shall wonder and be excited," while the Targum⁵ has "shall be destroyed." All these versions point to the reading וְבָלְעוּ. The translators of the Vulgate and the Arabic pointed the verb as a *Qal* or *Piel*, and the other three versions came from reading it as a *Pual*. For the LXX compare καταβαλω, used absolutely and pregnantly for "going down to Hades" in Isa. 5:14; Ezek. 32:21, 30, and καταβάσω, "a way down," especially to the nether world (Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon *sub voce*). Hermes, the god who led souls down to the nether world, was called by the Rhodians and Athenians καταβάτης, poetic for καταβάτης (Scholiast on *The Peace* of Aristophanes, l. 650). בָּלַע with its various meanings, "swallow down," "confound," "destroy," furnishes sufficient explanation for the renderings of all these ancient versions. So it is not improbable that the reading of אָע arose from the dropping by some copyist of ב from וְבָלְעוּ.

For a very ingenious and at the same time exceedingly improbable solution of some of the problems connected with this verse see Critical Notes by Julius A. Bewer in *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of William Rainey Harper*, Vol. II, pp. 207-10. To account for the two Hebrew readings, תָּמִיד and סָבִיב, and the Greek οἰσιν, he thinks that originally the text at the end of the first half of the verse ran: הַגִּירִים אֶת כְּסִמִּידִי; that a copyist accidentally

omitted אֶתְכֶם and afterward wrote it in thus: הַגִּירִים תָּמִידִי or הַגִּירִים סָבִיבִי.

Then he was followed by two others, one of whom ignored the letters out of line

¹ καὶ καταβήσονται.

² et absorbent.

³ ويجرعون.

⁴ סבבסין סבבסין.

⁵ ויסתלעמוך.

and the ם at the end; the other dropped תמיד reading the letters up, or down as the case may be, and mistaking כ for ב, with סבא as a result. Finally this last copyist's work fell into the hands of one who read סביב for סבא. In addition to all the other improbabilities we must suppose according to this theory that the copyist responsible for the first change in the text conveniently left space sufficient for the insertion of a letter at just the right point in the line, and that his lines were far enough apart for two letters between them, one above the other. Every position taken is assumption pure and simple; for he has cited no parallels, nor has he produced any other proof. The Greek *σποδ* is easily explained by supposing the reading חמר for תמיד; and סביב may be from the hand of some Hebrew who substituted it for תמיד and as an interpretation of it. In harmony with this idea is Caspari's comment on תמיד, who thinks of all the nations drinking in turn one after the other until they perish. He says, "תמיד cannot be taken strictly; it can only mean *a long time* which ceases when all the nations have been destroyed." Hitzig's interpretation is, "*Continually*, so that the turn never comes from the nations to the Jews (Isa. 51:22 f.), as what immediately follows shows, even to their destruction." So the thought of the writer of סביב may have been that the nations drink all *around* so that none of them escape.

LITERATURE

Some of the more recent and important special works on Obadiah are: C. P. Caspari, *Der Prophet Obadja ausgelegt*, 1842; F. Delitzsch, *Wann weissagte Obadja?* (Rudelbach und Guericke, *Zeitschrift*, 1851, pp. 91 ff.); C. A. W. Seydel, *Der Prophet Obadja*, 1869; Peters, *Die Prophetie Obadjas*, 1892; Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, Zweite Reihe, Band III (1900), pp. 425-57; A. Condamin, "L'unité d'Abdias," *Revue biblique*, Vol. IX (1900); J. A. Selbie, "Obadiah," in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*; T. K. Cheyne, "Obadiah" in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*; J. M. P. Smith, "The Structure of Obadiah" in *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, January, 1906; Sievers, "Alttestamentliche Miscellen," in *Berichte ueber die Verhandlungen der Koeniglich-Saechsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig: Philologisch-historische Klasse*, Band 29 (1907); and for the late date of the parallel passage in Jer., chap. 49, see Schwally, *ZATW* (1888), pp. 177 ff., and Schmidt, "Jeremiah" (Book) in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*.

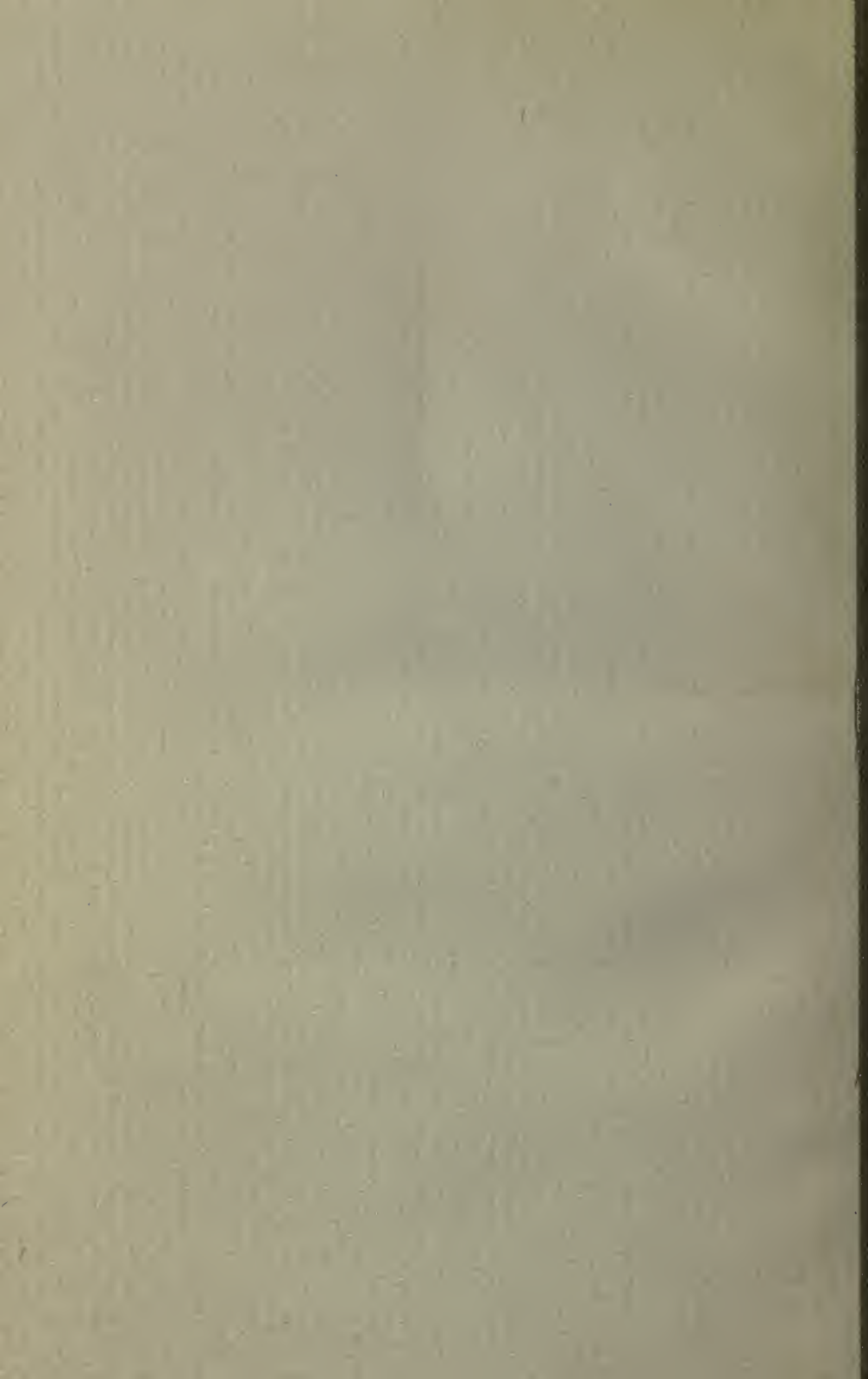
For Commentaries, Introductions, and other works of reference on the Twelve Minor Prophets see Harper's "Amos and Hosea" in *The International Critical Commentary*, where everything worth consulting, up to the time of its publication, may be found.

VITA

I, George A. Peckham, was born in Middlebury, now a part of Akron, Summit County, Ohio, July 17, 1851. I prepared for college in the Akron High School, in the Preparatory Department of Hiram College, and in Bethany College, and in the fall of 1872 entered Buchtel College, Akron, Ohio, graduating in the class of 1875 with the degree of A.B. For two years I was instructor in Greek, Latin, and Mathematics in my alma mater. In the fall of 1877 I was ordained to the ministry and served as pastor at Granger, Ohio, for one year, when I was elected to the professorship of Greek and Latin in Buchtel College. After holding this position for two years, I received a call to Hiram College, and since that time have held a professorship in the Ancient Language Department of this institution, at first the chair of Greek and Latin, later that of Biblical Languages, and since 1900 that of Old Testament Languages and Literature.

At the suggestion of President Harper that I do some university work I entered the University of Chicago as a student in the summer of 1900, and for three full summer quarters pursued Semitic study, taking work under President W. R. Harper, Professors R. F. Harper, Ira M. Price, H. L. Willett, and John M. P. Smith, and I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to them all. I feel that I owe much to President William R. Harper, a man of genuine piety, a thorough scholar, an inspiring teacher, and a commanding personality. I am especially indebted to Professor R. F. Harper for many hours of private instruction in Assyrian and incidentally in comparative grammar of the Semitic Languages. I am also under special obligation to Professor J. M. P. Smith who has furnished me with books and has been my counselor in the preparation of this thesis. He is in no way to be held responsible, however, for the positions here taken nor for the conclusions reached.





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